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THE  
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A O U N Q

R U L E R ' S  
Q U E S T I O N .

BY  
MARGARET JUNKIN PRESTON.



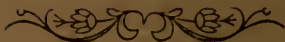
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WHAT

LACK

! YET?



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Yb 269 THE  
YOUNG RULER'S QUESTION.

I.

HE had riches, and ease, and honour,  
And never a Jewish boy  
Had passed on the banks of Jordan  
A quieter youth of joy.

II.

He had houses, and fields, and vineyards,  
And blessings of all degree ;  
None had a fairer portion  
In beautiful Galilee.

III.

Whatever this world could offer  
    Of pure and innocent bliss—  
Whatever his nature needed  
    Of goodliest gifts—was his.

IV.

He had felt no weary longings—  
    No wants that were unsupplied ;  
Upright, and just, and noble,  
    His spirit was satisfied.

V.

Only one thought had power  
    Ever a doubt to cast :  
—Joy, to be wholly perfect,  
    Must be a joy *to last* :

VI.

And he knew that his own was fleeting ;  
For he read in the sacred Psalm,  
That man must fade as a flower,  
And it sometimes marred his calm.

VII.

He turned to the holy Prophets,  
Security thence to draw ;  
And he listened to Moses' teachings,  
And he strove to keep the Law.

VIII.

He tithed his anise and cummin—  
He tithed his mint and rue :  
He *knew* he had earth's best treasures—  
He *hoped* he had heaven's too.

IX

—In the mart of a busy city  
    It came to pass, one day,  
That a throng of curious people  
    Were choking the narrow way,

X.

All pressing with upturned faces,  
    Eager to hear and see  
The miracle-working Rabbi  
    Who had come to Galilee.

XI.

—“ Now, verily, what will it profit  
    A man, tho' he gain the whole  
Of the world, with its utmost glory,  
    If yet he should lose his soul ?



XII.

“Come unto me, ye weary—”

Dropped on the passing ear  
On the young and happy Ruler,  
For he could not choose but hear.

XIII.

He did not pause to listen  
As he skirted the crowd, but went  
Homeward athwart the city,  
Wrapped in his sweet content.

XIV.

Yet ever and oft, the Teacher  
Rose to his inward eye ;  
Over and over the question  
Waited his heart's reply.

XV.

—Bliss that should be eternal—  
—Pleasures that could not cloy—  
These were the very blessings  
    Needed to crown his joy !

XVI.

Again through the palm-girt highways,  
    When noontide's sultry flame  
Was searing the happy vineyard,  
    The wonderful Teacher came.

XVII

And the Ruler hailed His coming ;  
    For harvest or vintage cheer  
Never had silenced the question  
    That troubled his restless ear.

XVIII.

Hastening, he sought the Prophet  
Whose words had waked the strife :  
—“What shall I do, good Master,  
To inherit eternal life?”

XIX.

As he kneeled so young and guileless,  
Single in aim and art,—  
Jesus, seeing him, loved him,  
Tho' He read his inmost heart.

XX.

And he answered and said, as gently  
As father would say to son : [ments ;”  
—“Thou knowest the Ten Command-  
And he spake them one by one.

XXI.

A look that was half reproachful  
The eye of the Saviour met :  
—“ I have kept them even from childhood ;  
Master, what lack I yet ?”

XXII.

And Jesus, seeing him, loved him,  
And a human sympathy stole,  
As He gazed on the earnest pleader,  
Deep into His sacred soul.

XXIII.

All blessings this life could bring him  
Even now were his, He knew ;  
But he coveted both possessions—  
The earthly and heavenly too.

XXIV.

Never diviner pity  
Melted the mournful eye,  
Never a tearfuller yearning,  
Than softened the firm reply :

XXV.

" Only one thing thou lackest ;  
Give up thy portion here—  
All of thy stored abundance—  
Everything heart holds dear :

XXVI.

" Choose thee between the blessings—  
This—or the life to be :  
Thou shalt have treasure in heaven,  
If thou wilt follow me !"

XXVII.

A sudden, surprised dejection  
    Flooded the lifted face—  
Doubting and disappointment  
    Darkened the wistful gaze.

XXVIII

Verily, this was a doctrine  
    Hard for the flesh and sore;  
This was a self-denying  
    Never conceived before !

XXIX.

Had there been half required,  
    Then he might heed the call :  
Dignities, loves, possessions—  
    How could he yield them all ?

XXX.

Bitter the stern exaction

Fell on his heart that day ;

And wavering—wishing—choosing—

He sorrowfully went away.

XXXI.

—Ye who have read and marvelled

That Jesus, who loved him so,

Should let him depart unhindered,—

Will ye, like the Ruler, go?

XXXII.

Ponder the solemn question

Deep in each conscience set,

Asking in soul-like earnest,

“Master, what lack I yet?”

XXXIII.

Choose ye, as every seeker  
 Who findeth Him truly doth,  
 —Earthly, or Heavenly treasure—  
 For ye cannot inherit both !

XXXIV.

Ye may be near the kingdom—  
 Nearer than any know—  
 And Jesus may love and pity,  
 And yet—*He may let you go !*







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